MICHAEL FAIRLESS

LIFE AND WRITINGS

WILLIAM SCOTT PALMER
AND A. M. HAGGARD

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MICHAEL FAIRLESS

BY W. SCOTT PALMER.

FROM THE FOREST.
PILGRIM MAN.
A MODERN MYSTIC'S WAY.
WINTER AND SPRING.

By W. SCOTT PALMER.

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Drawn from life, July 1901.

Michael Fairless

Her Life and Writings

By

W. Scott Palmer (M. E. Dowson)

and

A. M. Haggard

With Two Portraits

by

Elinor Dowson

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INTRODUCTION

I

On ne doit jamais écrire que de ce qu'on aime. It is my happy fortune that I love Michael Fairless; and although, before I began to write of her, I thought the demand anything but happy that compelled me to break the silence she desired, I have come to think even this a part of my good fortune too. I have come indeed to feel that, since her wish to remain unknown must be set aside in face of circumstances she could never have foreseen, this may bring new fulfilment to a desire that lay far nearer to her heart—the desire to give away all she had, to hoard nothing, not even her own self.

Much that Mrs Haggard says of her sister's early childhood is new to me; but all is congruous, as the bud is congruous with the rose. The child with her pet animals I have seen in the woman for whom all animals, even the very fierce, were friends, telling each its own secret and able to receive something of the great human secret offered them in her. They grew, these creatures, grew in spirit, under the magic of her hands and in the stirring warmth of her heart. The wild ones knew her as they knew the little poor man upon the Umbrian hills. Birds would perch about her, rabbits play; even the 'tramp cats,' as she calls them in her Christmas Idyll—cats who had taken to the woods and become worse than wild—learnt from her the graces of home life and laid savagery down. 'She had a way with her,' as they say in Ireland. And this way stretched

beyond the kingdom of the beasts and bees and birds. When I first learnt to know her she had a little cottage on a high road, the great Bath road of many tramps. It had been the lodge of an abandoned manor house, and was, of course, close to the gateway. There she tamed her tramp men and made them friends. Every man who came had a table and chair under shelter; the plainest, simplest food; materials for mending his clothes, tea or cocoa to drink, her smile, her wonderful eyes upon his, her open heart and word. Never a thing was stolen from her doors, her wide windows; never a penny did she give; but many a man begged leave to chop wood for her, to dig in her garden—some little thing to show what she had done for him.

It seemed to me illuminating; it pointed me to the one great hope for this world, the hope of the coming of

the kingdom of God in the power of man's self-sharing, fearless, love for men.

Mrs Haggard alludes very briefly to Michael Fairless's 'psychic' gifts. Of these I had said nothing; she herself made nothing of them. But they were strong, too strong to be overlooked by anyone who knew her well. It would lead me outside my province if I were to attempt here an adequate discussion of the matter. I will say only that she was 'telepathic' in a high degree, had that sympathetic insight which reveals actual facts hidden from the physical senses. The connexion of this with power over animals is a problem of great interest for which, again, there is no place here. How far her insight—her interior vision—reached I cannot say; that it went beyond animals, tramps, and her best friends I am assured by my experience of her. There is an

instance given in 'A Modern Mystic's Way' which is true to the letter. The account given there was transcribed in every point from notes taken at the time and signed by her as correct.

She was one whom we who knew her do not try to measure by ordinary standards, the rules of everyday, in any of the relations of life. Need I say that there were people whom she puzzled, bewildered? Or that there were others who not only failed to understand, but wholly misunderstood her? They always do it; they will do it still, no doubt, even when they have read every word Mrs Haggard and I have written here.

W. S. P.

HARTFIELD, *January* 1913.

II

It has always been a matter of wonder to the writer that the affection of the public for a favourite author should stop short of observing his wishes. Michael Fairless most straitly charged those who would represent her to abstain from the publication of her identity. But demand creates supply, and the interest in her has become so extended that if authorised information about her is not forthcoming, something of an unauthorised and incorrect nature will probably be produced. Only one thing would have made Michael Fairless more vexed than the publication of the truth about her, and that thing would have been the publication of untruth. So many garbled statements, inaccurate assertions and pure fictions have appeared about her that it is time for uncertainty to be dispelled. Death has left ab-

solutely authentic knowledge in the hands of two people only—the writers of this volume. Her eldest sister has chronicled such of the very simple happenings of Michael Fairless's life as have left some record of her character, and save for brief mention, is confidently leaving the treatment of her work and its effect in the competent and devoted hands of Mrs Dowson, her dear friend and literary executor.

A. M. HAGGARD.

CHELSEA, *January* 1913.

HER LIFE

BY

A. M. HAGGARD

Drawn from a photograph.

HER LIFE

Margaret Fairless Barber was born on the 7th of May 1869 at Castle Hill, Rastrick, in the W. Riding of Yorkshire, in the house that had been her grandfather's, and where her father was also born. She was the youngest of the three daughters of the late Fairless Barber and Maria Musgrave, his wife, and was christened after the great-grandmother, whose violet eyes she inherited, eyes that had reappeared in one member of each generation, though in Margaret's case the violet gradually turned to a most beautiful grey. It is perhaps worth recording for the curious in such matters, that this family of five members had but three birthdays. The eldest and youngest girls were born on

the same day at a nine years' interval, and the second girl on her father's birthday: only the mother had a day to herself, a fact for which the children used to feel it appropriate to offer affectionate sympathy as being such a lonely condition. A grandchild—her eldest daughter's first child—subsequently removed this reproach by appearing within a few hours of the anniversary. As Michael Fairless undoubtedly inherited many of their tendencies, it may not be inappropriate to give a slight description of her parents and the home in which she spent her earlier years.

Her father was educated at St Peter's at York, where he distinguished himself in mathematics, painting, and poetry, writing the Prize Poem one year. He subsequently took up his father's profession of the law, and acquired a large practice. All the work which this en-

tailed did not, however, prevent him from the pursuit of his private tastes, which were antiquarian and literary. He collected old oak and books, and gradually amassed a library of his favourite subjects: archeology, topography, travels, essays, poetry; standard novels and the Cornhill Magazine, which in those days contained the work of Thackeray, George Eliot, George Meredith, Mrs Browning, and others. He was gentle, quiet, and studious, well-read, an excellent Latin scholar, and a man with a keen sense of humour, absolutely devoted to his home and family.

Her mother had received an unusually liberal education for early Victorian days, and had studied French, German, and Italian; she was a highly cultivated woman, with a fine taste in literature. Tennyson, Ruskin, Eugénie de Guérin, Schiller, Pascal's Pensées and Jeremy

Taylor recur to the memory as being amongst others on her shelves. She was also an exquisite needlewoman, and an admirable housekeeper and accountant. In her younger days Mesmerism and Animal Magnetism were being socially discussed, and she discovered herself possessed of great mesmeric power. But she never pursued the matter as a study, and mention is only made of it because it is probably from her mother's tendencies that Michael Fairless derived the germs of her own psychic development. Parents and children were most deeply attached, and husband and wife so completely wrapped up in each other that their devotion was almost proverbial in the neighbourhood. The children used to show their mother all their various little efforts in sewing, painting, or scribbling, and due encouragement was always given. But they were never allowed to

think that it was quite the best they could do, or that anything they did was at all wonderful. Thus the spirit of ambition was fostered, and any idea of precocity discouraged, for Mrs Barber had the greatest objection to anything in the nature of an infant phenomenon. The household was a very quiet one, in outward observances almost what would now be considered puritanical; in mental outlook extremely wide-minded, liberal and unprejudiced. Since environment counts for a good deal in development, this sketch will enable the reader to trace the source of some of Michael Fairless's characteristics.

The house stood in a large garden and was a long, irregular building, on the site of an ancient Danish fort. It was fronted with a large and extremely solid porch, and its rooms were spacious and mostly lined with books. The bedroom windows were hung from spring to autumn with

white dimity, after the old fashion, and this was replaced, when the brief Yorkshire summer ended, by curtains of dark crimson woollen which shut out the wild inclement weather, when the days drew in, and sent the children clustering round the fire, and making tales, as all children do, about the visions they saw in its glowing depths. That large snug nursery saw many games; with the two elder girls housekeeping was a favourite one, in the course of which the baby came in very handily as a baby instead of the doll which had hitherto served. She was also taken out driving and sailing—the nursery sofa serving equally well for a steamer or a carriage.

Michael was called Baba until she was four or five years old, when she became Marjorie, which name she afterwards retained. At this time she was a very pretty child with fair hair, a rather snub nose, a large but quite perfectly shaped

mouth, and a pair of most beautiful eyes. An enterprising and enquiring disposition found, perhaps, its earliest manifestation in a large and surreptitious bite at the soap during a bath, in spite of her old nurse's warnings, who had vainly tried to check an inclination for this experiment. It was the first and last bite, for a certain clear shrewdness and common sense were early developed and retained. When she was about three years old her mother went abroad for three months, and during her absence the child developed croup, terrifying her father, who was the most devoted of parents, and went far towards spoiling her. Indeed, beyond a mild scolding, he never found it in his heart to inflict a more severe punishment than shaking his closed umbrella at her on an occasion when—just ready to go out—he had been recalled to deal with some extra naughtiness; Baba howled with rage,

but it is to be feared that the proceeding did not act as much of a deterrent. She always knew exactly what she wanted, and seldom regretted her proceedings in those very youthful days. Once, when in charge of an aunt, she killed a fly on the window with a dab of her little fist. The aunt sought to improve the occasion, "See what you have done, Baba; how cruel! You killed that poor little fly, and if you try and try you can never make it alive again." "No," returned Baba, "I know I can't; I don't want to."

Later, when she was seven years old, her sisters went to school, and then came the time she speaks of as her lonely childhood. The neighbourhood was singularly wanting in children of her own age, and she was obliged to play by herself and find her own amusements. It was at this period too that she fraternised with the frog, who lived

in the little brook that ran through the home-field. She was still very much of a pet, and, though independent in character, had no objection to be run after and waited on. Sometimes, however, even affectionate supervision had serious drawbacks; on one occasion, a Sunday evening, the maid who put her to bed being out, that duty was undertaken by Franklin, the cook, usually regarded as a firm friend. On this particular evening Baba did not at all wish to go to bed, and was caught for the purpose after some chasing and insistence; she was quiet, but most dignified during the disrobing process, and said her prayers with much unction, adding an additional petition, "And pray, God, forgive Franklin for being so unkind to me!"

She learnt to read when very young, and reading was always her favourite occupation; she did not care much for dolls or toys. When she was about nine

her eldest sister, who had then left school, taught her the moves of chess, and she picked up the game very rapidly. Her sister, it is true, was a slow mover, and by no means a formidable opponent, and the child very soon became able to give her checkmate. She would sit at the board with a book beside her, which she read between moves, looking up when it was her turn to play and giving a rapid glance at the pieces. Then swiftly and unhesitatingly the move was made and she returned to the book. She probably won two-thirds of the games.

Although she was but a child she greatly resented what she called being made into a baby. Her eldest sister, who often undertook to give her her lessons, insisted one day on a dictation being written on a slate instead of on a piece of paper, since Marjorie was careless with ink. Like the man in Calverley's

poem, Marjorie " argued right, she argued left, she also argued round about her." The sister, who had already been through painful experiences with Marjorie's use of pens and ink, stood firm, and, ruling lines on the slate, placed it before her reluctant pupil, who was by this time much out of breath from the length and variety of her conversation on the subject of being treated as a baby. Seizing the slate Marjorie waved it dramatically above her head, and shouted, " Aggie ! when I was a child, I thought as a child, I understood as a child, but when I became a man " (here the slate was banged down upon the table), " I put away childish things."

On another occasion Marjorie was forbidden to bring two favourite play-things to lessons. They were two small balls of home manufacture and surprising powers of bounce, and she called them Winkie and Nobbs. After considerable

delay W. and N. were most unwillingly put out of sight and reach—physical reach — and with strangely sudden docility a dictation was begun. It concerned Henry VIII. and Anne Boleyn, and Marjorie wrote on, with the most praiseworthy attention. When correction time came her sister's feelings may be imagined, as she made the discovery that whenever Henry VIII. was in question, he was alluded to as King Winkie, while the unhappy Anne had become Queen Nobbs! The effect was so ludicrous that the sisters laughed over it together until they cried.

About this time Marjorie took up hero-worship with a zest and thoroughness which she devoted to all her pursuits, and if anyone ventured to suggest that even her own particular heroes had their weak points, she would wax quite fierce in their defence. In this way Horatius Cocles (she had just been introduced to

the Lays of Ancient Rome), Julius Cæsar, and Napoleon all had their day; she cried with anger when certain indisputable faults were pointed out to her in the last-mentioned personage. She had now developed remarkable powers of expression, and wrote quite interesting letters. Her father being suddenly taken ill, and it becoming necessary to keep the house quite quiet, she was invited by an elderly relative, who lived a few miles away, to stay with her for a short visit. Marjorie was not at all anxious to go, but finally consented, one of the inducements being that she might help with the fowls which her cousin kept, and that there would be beautiful new-laid eggs for breakfast. Her letter, after a few days' stay, was most amusing. It was a very old-fashioned house, and she had been put to sleep in a four-post bedstead, which she said reminded her of a hearse, while the newspapers, placed upon the

top to keep off the dust, "rustled like the flowers at the funeral." "As for eggs," she continued, "I haven't seen as much as the white of an egg since I came."

Like her sisters she had read omnivorously; the nursery shelves, though well furnished, did not last her long, and she browsed in the library. She had got through all Dickens and most of Sir Walter Scott before she was twelve. She read very quickly, and had the knack of mastering the essentials of her reading with extraordinary rapidity, so that in a very short time she could discuss her subject even when it chanced to be rather more serious than fiction. Natural history she was extremely fond of, and with all animals she was an instant friend. Some time later, Whiskey, the white rat, and a tamed starling, fallen from the nest and picked up half-fledged, were the objects of great devotion.

They involved a tiny tragedy too, for to the faithful Whiskey it appeared that overmuch affection was bestowed upon the bird, and he, who had hitherto lived in amity with his feathered companion, flew at him one afternoon and fatally injured him. His mistress never quite forgave Whiskey, though after a temporary estrangement, due to that unfortunate fit of temper, the rat was readmitted to fellowship. In her later years there was Trilby, a stray cat, who somehow suggested a depressed charwoman; Phœbus, a magnificent orange Persian, who purred under his daily brushing if she undertook it, but growled and swore in other hands. There was also a poor dancing bear whose sore foot she dressed at the street door, while his owner looked on expecting to see her attacked in spite of the muzzle, but watched Bruin fawn on her instead. You can trace her understanding of all

living things whenever she writes of them. Who can forget the anxious hen in " The Roadmender," or " The Follering Bürd," or the tortoise, making " a stately meal of buttercups," or the sense of myriad life which came to her as she lay under the great tree on her last day in the garden ?

Her father died in 1881, when she was twelve years old ; and her mother, never a very strong woman, was completely prostrated by her loss. At about thirteen Marjorie went to school at Torquay with a relative for a few months, and subsequently spent a short time in another school near London, whose principal was far from appreciating her. Except for home-teaching and wide and constant reading this was all the education she had.

Between 1882 and 1884 Marjorie's health became affected by her rapid growth, and some spinal weakness was

disclosed. Her rather delicate condition, as well as her mother's invalidism, and the fact that one of her sisters was already married and the other away from home, finally decided Mrs Barber to give up the house in Yorkshire, now so much too large for the diminished family, and settle somewhere experimentally until a final residence could be fixed on. Marjorie's health then improved, and she went to a small children's hospital on the outskirts of London maintained by the private generosity of two ladies. Here she began training as a sick-nurse, a profession for which she had much natural aptitude, and here she went through the ordeal of being present at her first operation. It did not affect her as much as she had imagined might be the case, but she did not stay more than a few months at the hospital as her own health was too indifferent to permit of longer training. About this

time she joined a modelling class, and her master, when shown her work, refused to believe that it was her first effort, and that she had never previously had a lesson. Between 1886 and 1891 she spent a certain amount of time in Torquay, where she helped to nurse a relative in failing health, and after her death became for a time parish nurse. She also worked in the East End for a short time, in the district well (or ill) known as the Jago. In 1891 her mother died in the small Suffolk town where she had taken a house ; it was the Bungay so faithfully described as the goal of the blind friar's journey in Brother Hilarius. Here Marjorie used to enjoy rowing herself on the river, and here the tradespeople still remember her as 'so nice to talk to.' She was intuitive to a high degree, and therefore could sympathise with widely divergent joys and griefs. Her keen sense of

humour, too, prevented her ever being depressed or unamused, and probably in all her life she never felt bored.

Marjorie was twenty-two years old when her mother died. She was very tall, with a fair complexion, a good deal of brown hair, very large grey eyes full of expression—an index indeed of whatever she was speaking or thinking about. They could beam with serene pleasure, grow tenderly sympathetic or dance with mischievous fun as the spirit moved her. Her face and appearance were most arresting and her conversation quite fascinating, for she was extremely witty. Quick to see the humorous side of a thing, she yet responded to any mood of her companions. Her eldest sister once heard her described by a bluff and frank naval officer as 'rattling good company,' and the words were apt.

After her mother's death, which occurred rather unexpectedly, Marjorie

lived for a time a somewhat varied existence partly in England and partly in Germany, where with a friend she stayed for a while in a quaint little place on the Rhine. Their lodgings were in an old tower, where they were one night serenaded by students to Marjorie's great delight and amusement. She was also for some time in Wiesbaden under treatment for her eyesight, which was just then giving her trouble. She was here overtaken by a sudden and serious attack of illness, during which she was most devotedly nursed by the little Sister of Charity, a "scant five feet" high, described in "A German Christmas Eve."

After her recovery and return to England she again took up philanthropic work, and it was an errand of this nature which first introduced her to the household into which she was afterwards adopted. The family's

interests were literary, scientific, and artistic, and they were not slow to appreciate the combination of rare and valuable qualities which they perceived in Marjorie. Her position at the time was an independent but singularly lonely one. Both her sisters were married, one always abroad, and she had no especial claim on any of her other relatives. She was financially independent; her health was already most uncertain, and she was subject to distressing and painful attacks of illness. Here was a home whose doors were open for her; a circle of friends with hands outstretched in welcome and invitation. When she decided to enter the one and accept the other, many of her own relatives disapproved, and when, with characteristic thoroughness of accomplishment, she dropped her own family name and took that of her adopted one, sundry hard things were

written and spoken. To her eldest sister, however, the "adoption" brought nothing but relief and approval; to feel that one so needing it would for the future have every care and attention that could be given in either sickness or health; that she would live among the most congenial surroundings and be able to follow her artistic bent in whatever direction it might suggest itself—these things weighed heavier than the superficial loss of identity which the change of name entailed. Nor was her content ever disturbed. As time passed and Marjorie's health grew feebler, redoubled care was exercised, and every expedient which science could supply or affection suggest, was used in the endeavour to ease, when, alas, it became apparent that her deathward way could only be smoothed but by no means arrested.

Marjorie's temperament was essenti-

ally creative; the need for expression was so strong that as her health broke down, and one pursuit after another became impossible, she found fresh outlets. When she could no longer go about much she took up her modelling again, and executed, among other things, a really wonderful crucifix. Her power of entering into the spirit of her work was extraordinary; she became, as it were, obsessed with it. On seeing the crucifix a good judge of mediæval work asked its owners where they got their "14th century" work? Marjorie's mind, at the time she executed this, was full of Florentine work of that period, and it set its sign on what she wrought.

When she became too ill to go on with her modelling, she began to write; when writing could not be done in a sitting position, she propped the paper on her chest and wrote lying down; by and by the right hand could no

longer be used, so she wrote with her left, a beautiful legible script. When increased physical weakness made writing in every way impossible, she dictated.

She lived in those days in an old Georgian house on Chelsea Embankment, a house from which she could hear the gulls scream over the Thames, recalling "Daddy Whiddon" and "The Follerin' Bürd," and where, under her window, grew the grimy tree in which the sparrow brethren chattered and squabbled. Round her room one of her adopted sisters had designed the frieze of flowers which was "Like the Rose tree in Alice in Wonderland." For many, many weeks she lay, suffering acutely, yet always writing, piecing together that exquisite literary mosaic called "The Roadmender." By and by when the summer came and the heat, when London

noises wearied ear and brain alike, she sighed for the green peace of the country. Her condition was then such that no one could tell how long she might still be spared. Every precaution against fatigue or shaking could not really eliminate either from the journey, which was an awful strain on an enfeebled frame. But once among the Sussex fields, with the downs in sight, her contentment grew daily in spite of terrible pain and exhaustion. She had the clear sunshine, the clean air, the swallows that twittered from their nests above her windows, and her cup of satisfaction was full. The watchers knew their task would be but a brief one, yet none could know when the end might come. She was extremely happy with those she loved around her; her dear animal friends were there too, for Phœbus, the big cat, and Jacob, most faithful of little bull-dogs (he was of the French

breed), had migrated to the country also. Marjorie was almost unable to take any nourishment of any kind by now, yet her courage and cheerfulness never failed, and she showed the keenest interest in any subject discussed. The proofs of "Brother Hilarius" were coming in daily for correction, and she weighed every word as it was read to her; she would insert a comma here, begin a fresh paragraph there, and secure the cadence of every sentence. She would sometimes add or take away even a syllable in some phrase which struck her sensitive ear as not properly balanced or harmonious. At this time she was failing very rapidly, and it seemed doubtful if she would finish the proofs. But her interest was unabated though she was in the last stages of intense weakness, and it seemed as if she could not leave her work until it was done. She lived to complete the task; and a few days later, after many

hours of unconsciousness, she passed through that white gate whence her words have echoed back with such gracious insistence. Her suffering had been awful, her courage wellnigh incredible, but none could regret the peace she had won, and it was not without reason that her eldest sister, roaming the garden for flowers in the twilight of early dawn, chose out of all blossoms the heartsease that fashioned the first cross laid on her breast. She died on the 24th of August 1901, in her thirty-third year.

Looking back over the time which has elapsed since she cried her farewell, it is comparatively easy to give some idea of her marvellous development during her last six years of life, the years, that is to say, when experiment had taught relative importance, and experience had brought certainty. During her time of comparative health, when

able to work and travel, to make acquaintances and friends—and how many and faithful they were—to strive after the betterment of poverty and sickness, during that time Marjorie had accumulated a magnificent series of what may be called mental photographs. All her days she had been a keen and humorous observer, with an extraordinary and retentive memory, and when ill-health narrowed the circle of physical activity her mentality asserted itself more strongly. She turned, as it were, to the portfolio of her memory and looked over its pictures, seeing them now more truly because she was their spectator, and no longer swayed or diverted by the momentary action which had made them hers. She dipped the brush of imagination into the colours of reality, and lo, they became living as they limned forth those scenes which her life and its happenings had gathered; for

Michael Fairless's art, in whatever direction, owed its rare loveliness to its absolute truth, and it is the width of appeal in the truth as she set it forth which has won her so many readers. Her subjects were never out of the way or far-fetched, yet her unerring instinct set the seal of speciality on whatever subject she touched. Page after page of her writing reveals fresh beauty in the simplest things; the busy little German nun, the child trotting with its cats to seek counsel, the London sparrows, old Gawdine, "Luvly Miss" and her owner, a pathetic little bundle in cotton wool, dying of her burns, and cheered at the last by the resurrection of her treasure; the old man on his way to the workhouse, the woman haymaking and nursing her love-child in the field-corner, the parson who stayed to talk with the roadmender and bestowed rare tobacco—they are a veritable portrait-

gallery. Think, too, of that scene at the inn when Brother Hilarius guides the blind friar, and Piping Hugh of Mildenhall whistles like a bird on his oaten straw. The pictures are produced without effort; Michael Fairless saw with the inner vision, and to her expression was easy. Hers was a delicate and a subtle gift, perfect of its kind, a gift that has drawn many after her along the road she mended, ay, the gift that for many has changed a darksome portal into a white gate, framed in clustering boughs, and set in the gracious sunlight of summer.

HER WRITINGS

BY

W. SCOTT PALMER

(M. E. DOWSON)

HER WRITINGS

THE ROADMENDER

I

Michael Fairless was an artist, with the artist's longing for creative expression. But while she was able to move about among her fellows her imaginative force, together with such strength of body as she had and her fine intellectual endowment, was spent on their behalf. She gave herself without stint and, it appeared, without regret for much that must consequently stand aside. Men and their miseries, their poverty, pleasures, joys and pain, seemed to take the place for her of the artist's material in language or clay or colour. The

material she chose was life, life in all its crudity or evasiveness, its stubborn resistance, forbidding weakness, its failures and faults; and with the far-reaching promise upon which only faith as strong as hers can keep a constant hold. In each man she saw, through disfigurement and disguise, his proper reflexion of the divine image, as a sculptor sees in the block of marble the one beauty that he is to set free.

There were times when I thought this passion of hers would always be enough. I thought the fountain of charity in her heart would never allow her artistic longings to be carried into any field but that of life. When the claims of human needs and suffering for the moment slackened, I saw that there was always the attraction of a perennial love and carefulness for every creature of the earth, even the very lowest. From the blade of grass and the clod on which it

grew, to every beast and bird, all things entered her soul to become her own, to become centres of the active, self-devoted interest that one gives only to one's own. I might well think that she would live and die without any disturbing recognition of another longing unfulfilled. Moreover, her enjoyment of the creative work of others was never tainted by self-pity, or by that base alloy of envy which kills delight in many of us, whose gifts and executive powers are far inferior to hers. It seemed reasonable to think that her love of beauty would be satisfied with what her indomitable eagerness and energy enabled her to absorb from literature, painting and sculpture, from music and, above all, from the symbolism of religion in its poetry of psalm and stately hymn, and in those lovely myths with which the childlike heart of man has clothed his intuitions of divine things. But I was

wrong. The impulse to create, though often overborne, was very masterful.

Out of that impulse sprang the crucifix now in St John Baptist's church in London (Pimlico Road). In this she shewed a promise of what might have been had she been trained and practised in a plastic art. But I am sure, nevertheless, that nothing short of inability to go out into the highways of life, to seek and find, or at the least to be sought and found by, troubled men and women, would have turned her finally to any engrossing work other than that which she could do for them.

Twenty months before she died the opportunity came—as mortal sickness. To most of us it would hardly have been an opportunity. Among our writers only a few unconquerable spirits, of whom Robert Louis Stevenson perhaps is chief, have been able to overcome

flesh and its hindrances by the governance of the soul, when the weight of Death's heavy hand has been laid upon them. For men of this rank, life, when it meets new difficulty in a body nearing to the grave, rises against that difficulty in a fresh uplifting of power. The men themselves are carried beyond the atmosphere of oppression caused by the disabilities of mortal sickness; and we watch them working miracles, as though these were trifles light as air. Of that rare company was Michael Fairless. But she knew when and how she was beaten; for there is another thing to be noted of that company—an illuminated common sense. They work miracles, it is true; but they are not often found trying impossibilities. Their faith is potent, but it is neither superstitious nor absurd. Behind what looks to many of us a reckless venture and a foolish hope it seems that there is, in

reality, something which takes the place of a prudent man's prudent calculation. It seems that where other men must calculate they *see*—yet without knowing that they see. They know what they can and what they cannot do; but it is as though by a concealed interior vision, not by mere guess, that they make discoveries. Their decisions are, for the most part, not to be justified by the maxims and habits of ordinary usage in life, yet are very often crowned with good success and are richly productive as ordinary ways are not. They have, as I said, their common sense.

So, when Michael Fairless met defeat, she laid down her arms, the wonted weapons of her charity, but took up others. And with these she made a way, not only to hearts beyond any range of hers before, but also for her artist-soul, frustrate in the years gone by. We who looked on thought that

but for the help she could give to friends able to come to her bedside, most likely she would do nothing more. Again we were wrong.

We took her away from London to the Down country that she loved, hoping for some recovery—against hope and against her own conviction. There, in her 'cool light room on the garden 'level' with windows opening to the ground, day after day she looked 'across 'the bright grass—*il verde smalto*—' and beyond 'the promise of coming 'lilies,' to the Gate of her symbolic fancy:—'I know now,' she says in "The Roadmender," 'that whenever and 'wherever I die my soul will pass out 'through this white gate.'

There, beside the gate, the roadmender was born. I suppose he was fully grown in the spirit of her meditation before she spoke of him. Certainly it was her own

soul, mind, heart, and life's experience that he embodied. He was conceived of her, bone of her bone, spirit of her spirit. Who knows him knows her; in following his life and death we follow hers. His realized ideal is hers that was unrealized. But indeed in him she touched realization. 'I am a road-'mender,' she said to me, 'there, by the 'white gate.' As in all true artists, life passed from her into her creation, virtue went forth from her, and she with virtue: she *was* that roadmender.

I think she would have been content with giving him life thus, within her own artistic cognizance, but for another thing. She wanted to earn money, little or much; had a hundred uses for it; saw that perhaps some would come into her hands this way. So she demanded of me pencil and paper, and wrote down (with her left hand, the right being disabled; and without being lifted up

in bed) the first chapter of 'The Roadmender.' She wrote easily, it appeared, and as well and clearly, almost as quickly, as before this last disabling sickness. She hardly ever paused for thought or word, and made small correction. To the best of my present memory the second chapter was written next day and with the same swift facility.

Neither of these, nor any that followed, was thought of by her (or for that matter by me) as a chapter; each was no more than a sketch, a little paper telling of the roadmender she was. Not until much later, in fact just before the end, did it occur to either of us that she had been writing a book.

We sent those sketches, the first and second, to Mr Lathbury, the editor of *The Pilot*, who accepted them with encouraging, and to her surprising, readiness. They were published; and from that time to this their readers, in a fast

increasing number, have asked for news, facts, about the writer. Unquestionably The Roadmender's appeal, whatever it was, went home there and then and has never ceased to find response. But this is not the place in which that appeal should be discussed; it shall be dealt with later. Here I only allude to it in passing, as a significant piece of the short history of an all too short literary life.

For anyone who knew the previous life of the author, the fitness of her roadmender to present herself and her ideals was obvious. 'After all,' he says for her in that opening chapter, 'what 'do we ask of life, here or indeed here-'after, but leave to serve, to live, to 'commune with our fellow-men and 'with ourselves; and from the lap of 'earth to look up into the face of God?' That aspiration to service and com-

munion had been in her no affair of mere aspiration; it had been a burning force, not a quietistic scheme. Yet always her heart and soul rested gladly in 'the 'lap of earth'; and she turned her face towards the face of God as she discerned that vision everywhere, in earth and earth's little ones, and in the face of man. But a new peacefulness came with the laying down of arms, and she could picture herself quietly at work on the common road, serving 'the footsteps 'of her fellows'; indeed joining with contentment 'the company of weary old 'men who sit on the sunny side of the 'workhouse wall and wait for the tender 'mercies of God.'

Death it is that in truth she waits for in the pages of 'The Roadmender.' You will find death everywhere, a friend, a 'strong angel' and, as here, 'the 'tender mercies of God.' The road, too, although the common road of service

and of the common labour of man, is the one that leads into the great silence; the mysteries of God and man cast shadows in the sunshine of its 'white 'highway.' This is the background, or the chorus if you will, even of the first part of the book, where she is giving a picture of the man and herself, and furnishing his experience from her own experience in past days. There is the snake, bringing in Melampus and the revealing of secrets by the fatal kiss; there is the old widow, waiting, as she herself was waiting, for death and a '"kind" burial' in 'the little church-'yard which has been a cornfield, and 'may some day be one again.' The sea brings memories of 'its secret dead in 'the caverns of Peace,' and of 'the still 'and silent Sea of Glass' and 'the Voice 'as the voice of many waters.' But withal there is love, the constant love of earth's fair face, and its living adorn-

ment; the love for which she thanks God as 'the Brotherhood of the 'Poor'; even the bitter-sweet love of death itself:—'Very pleasant art 'thou, O Brother Death, thy love 'is wonderful, passing the love of 'women.'

'"Surely all men should be road-'menders,"' the parson says. 'O wise 'parson, so to read the lesson of the 'road!' That is her heart-felt comment.

The first part of the book ended with the ending of autumn, when we brought her back to London—to our house, 91 Cheyne Walk. She was borne to the station on a mattress laid in the bottom of a covered cart, the tilt thrown open at the back. As the cart went on, she watched through this opening, the receding lane—'lay as in a blissful dream,' she says. 'The looped-back tarpaulin 'framed the long vista of my road with

'the downs beyond; and I lay in the 'cool dark, caressed by the fresh breeze 'in its thoroughfare, soothed by the 'strong monotonous tramp of the great 'grey team and the music of the jangling 'harness.' 'It is like Life,' she goes on, 'this travelling backwards—that which 'has been, alone visible—like Life, 'which is, after all, retrospective with a 'steady moving on into the Unknown, 'Unseen, until Faith is lost in Sight 'and experience is no longer the touch-'stone of humanity.'

I believe she thought, then, that she would never come back to her road, to the green fields she loved so well, the garden that was 'an epitome of 'peace,' the sycamore-tree that made a microcosmic world for her as she lay beneath it, caressed by the sunlight scattered through its leaves. She thought, I believe, that Brother Death would meet her among the close-set

houses of the town, while she lay isolated in the great city. So she said farewell, not only with the roadmender to roadmending, but to the country of her love. Yet she says it with a characteristic qualifying :—'It is scarcely a 'farewell, for my road is ubiquitous, 'eternal; there are green ways in Para-'dise and golden streets in the beautiful 'City of God. Nevertheless, my heart 'is heavy; for, viewed by the light of 'the waning year, roadmending seems a 'great and wonderful work which I have 'poorly conceived of and meanly per-'formed: yet I have learnt to under-'stand dimly the truth of three great 'paradoxes—the blessing of a curse, the 'voice of silence, the companionship 'of solitude—and so take my leave of 'this stretch of road, and of you who 'have fared along the white highway 'through the medium of a printed 'page.

'Farewell! It is a roadmender's 'word; I cry you Godspeed to the next 'milestone—and beyond.' In her mind, I am sure, these words were the last she was to write.

II

The roadmender, however, had become part of herself, and as her life went on so he in her went on. But we cease to watch the moving picture of a fictitious experience at the roadside where men and the sacrificial beasts—the procession of a common life—went by. We are embarked upon the swiftly flowing river of her own life, as it passes to the sea. Henceforth the author speaks of herself almost undisguised; she is still the roadmender, but he lives, moves towards his death, rejoices, suffers, contemplates, reflects, as she does,

in the actual process of her being. What happens happens here and now—this is a day-book we are reading, very faithful, very candid, and only the more pathetic to us when we know it as it really is.

'The next milestone' marked for her the entrance to the valley of the shadow of death. She knew that still the days might but slowly drag out their tale, and she be long, yet, in passing through; she was assured now, and not only by her own conviction, that never would she pass from beneath that shadow until the gate of earth closed behind her, and she found herself in some such 'brave 'new world' as she had seen before in dream or vision, where the inner world of spirit, of the joy and light and hope in which her spirit dwelt while she was here, would show itself more plainly, less confused.

'Out of the Shadow' the new set of papers came, and thus they were headed

when she wrote the first. 'I am no longer 'a roadmender,' she says; 'the stretch 'of white highway which leads to the 'end of the world will know me no more; 'the fields and hedgerows, grass and 'leaf stiff with the crisp rime of winter's 'breath, lie beyond my horizon; the 'ewes in the folding, their mysterious eyes 'quick with the consciousness of coming 'motherhood, answer another's voice 'and hand; while I lie here, not in the 'lonely companionship of my expecta-'tions, but where the shadow is bright 'with kindly faces and gentle hands, 'until one kinder and gentler still carries 'me down the stairway into the larger 'room.'

There, in an old house fronting the Thames, she watched from her bed no longer the green grass, the meadows and the white gate with the roadmender's road, but the highway of water, 'the 'silent river of my heart' she calls

it, 'with its tale of wonder and 'years.'

Her love of roads and of running water is significant for the understanding of her character and mind. She is of those for whom life is movement, and time is real.

Nothing for her stands still, is fixed —static, as we say now; the whole creation moves with the movement and communicated freedom of the purposes of God, and with the outpouring of the divine spirit in the spirits of men. Even in the flux of earth she sees the flowing of the great rivers of the heavenly love; and all earth's roads and streams are but ways of that eternal journey of man, of which his temporal journeys are at once the cloak and sacrament.

As she looks upon the landscape of the world it grows transparent for her, and paradise, with its lucent life and many-coloured waters, shines through. The

life of the spirit is more real to her than any life beside, more real, more powerful, constraining. When she writes of little things you see that for her there are no little things; each touches the eternal and has its endless depth of meaning there. And because there is this endless meaning, this unfathomed background, this movement of all within the movement that is carrying all, roads have magic in her eyes—or rather are symbols of a more than magical truth. She watches the multitude travelling there along the ages in the pilgrimage of life that every man must share. No event, no spectacle in earth or heaven stands alone; she has the mystic's sense of wholeness and continuity, as of the dark impenetrable wonders underlying everything that can be seen even by the mystic's eye. Therefore, that which is seen signifies, carries with it, all the rest; every road 'leads to the

'end of the world,' every river has 'its 'tale of wonder and years' and flows into the sea where its waters shall be transformed.

She tells us that to meet death in the town was not what she had desired. 'I, a shy lover of the fields and woods, 'longed always, should a painless pass- 'ing be vouchsafed me, to make my bed 'on the fragrant pine needles in the 'aloneness of a great forest; to lie once 'again as I had lain many a time, 'bathed in the bitter sweetness of the 'sun-blessed pines, lapped in the mani- 'fold silence; my ear attuned to the 'wind of Heaven with its call from the 'Cities of Peace. In sterner mood, when 'Love's hand held a scourge, I craved 'rather the stress of the moorland with 'its bleaker mind imperative of sacrifice. 'To rest again under the lee of Rippon 'Tor, swept by the strong peat-smelling

'breeze; to stare untired at the long 'cloud-shadowed reaches, and watch the 'mist-wraiths huddle and shrink round 'the stones of blood; until my sacrifice 'too was accomplished, and my soul had 'fled. A wild waste moor; a vast void 'sky; and naught between heaven and 'earth but man, his sin-glazed eyes 'seeking afar the distant light of his 'own heart.'

But these moods had passed, and although the scourge Love held now in his hand was heavy and the sacrifice long of its accomplishment, she was, as she says, content to lie patiently in the great capital, with its stir of life and death, of toil and strife and pleasure, which she had thought 'an ill place for a sick man 'to wait in'; and there find 'the fulfil-'ment by antithesis of all desire.' '"It is 'not good that the man should be alone," 'said the Lord God.'

Day and night she follows the great

barges on the waterway, as she followed in her mind the coming and going on the road near her white gate. 'Throughout 'the long watches of the night I follow 'them; and in the early morning they 'slide by, their eyes pale in the twilight; 'while the stars flicker and fade, and the 'gas lamps die down into a dull yellow 'blotch against the glory and glow of a 'new day.' 'It is like Life,' she would have said again had you asked her; but she tells you nothing of her weariness in those night-watches nor of her pain.

On the wooden cross that marks her grave there are these words: 'Lo, how 'I loved thee!' They are taken from her last gift to me, Mother Julian's 'Revelations of Divine Love.'

In the groaning and travailing of creation she bore her part, but never alone; always God was there bearing his part and the part of every one.

Across the whole world there lay for her the light of the glory of divine sacrifice. Not for her was any picture of a serene and far-away God without 'parts or 'passions,' looking on at the world's pain; it was the glory of her God to share all pain. There was nothing, no weariness of hers or any man's, no suffering, even of the beasts, that was not his. And faith in God gave her also faith in suffering, in the value of a sacrifice to be accomplished, of a travail that should bring forth fruit to all eternity, of groaning that was the utterance of slaves working towards their manumission and the freedom of divine sons. 'Lo, how I loved thee!' All men shall hear this when their own sacrifice is indeed accomplished, and their 'sin-'glazed eyes' open to see who it is that has sacrificed himself in them. This was her strength.

Why, then, should she tell us of the

suffering she bore, as she went through the valley of the shadow comforted in the strength of the divine Companion of her way, the Love that so loved her and all the world ?

It is fitting that she writes here the story of Gawdine, the organ-grinder whom it was once her ' privilege to know ' ; it is fitting that I repeat it now.

' He was a hard swearer, a hard drinker, ' a hard liver, and he fortified himself ' body and soul against the world : he ' even drank alone, which is an evil ' sign.

' One day to Gawdine sober came a ' little dirty child, who clung to his ' empty trouser leg—he had lost a limb ' years before—with a persistent un- ' intelligible request. He shook the little ' chap off with a blow and a curse ; and ' the child was trotting dismally away, ' when it suddenly turned, ran back,

'and held up a dirty face for a 'kiss.

'Two days later Gawdine fell under a 'passing dray which inflicted terrible 'internal injuries on him. They patched 'him up in hospital, and he went back 'to his organ-grinding, taking with him 'two friends—a pain which fell suddenly 'upon him to rack and rend with an 'anguish of crucifixion, and the memory 'of a child's upturned face. Outwardly 'he was the same save that he changed 'the tunes of his organ, out of long-'hoarded savings, for the jigs and reels 'which children hold dear, and stood 'patiently playing them in child-crowded 'alleys, where pennies are not as plentiful 'as elsewhere.

'He continued to drink; it did not 'come within his new code to stop, since 'he could "carry his liquor well"; 'but he rarely, if ever, swore. He told 'me this tale through the throes of his

'anguish as he lay crouched on a mattress
'on the floor; and as the grip of the pain
'took him he tore and bit at his hands
'until they were maimed and bleeding, to
'keep the ready curses off his lips.

'He told the story, but he gave no
'reason, offered no explanation: he has
'been dead now many a year, and thus
'would I write his epitaph:—

'He saw the face of a little child, and looked on God.'

Love the supreme Sculptor at work on Gawdine, as on herself in her weariness and pain, at work too on the welter of all this world, calling forth from the rudest marble the divine Beauty that love is—this she sees. Love, too, looking from the face of a child and searching out his own image, his own response, from behind the battered mask that hides it from every other eye. And pain, the friend of sinners, the oppor-

tunity of love human and divine, love no less divine in that it has entered into man—this, too.

The whole philosophy to which Michael Fairless had attained is written in the true tale of Gawdine; a living, vibrant philosophy it was, entering into herself, her action, her judgements whether of reflective thought or of intuitive discovery.

It is not her way to see in an ill-driven dray the miraculous handiwork of God or a punishment for sin. "All things," she would have told us, as she tells us here, "work together for good" in those who do not resist good when it comes. The dray and the face of the child are for her instruments and channels of God; yet neither is constrained, compelled—each is free according to its measure, each follows the law of its own being. So both are sacraments of the universal sacrament in which our lives are set

and, according to their different measure, become mediators of the divine. The opportunity for both God and man is to be found everywhere by those who are willing to receive a gift; in pain or pleasure, riches or poverty, good hap or disaster. You have not to go in search of it; but neither must you turn away, or deny it even when it comes as the bitterest drop in the cup that you must drink. 'Two friends—an anguish of 'crucifixion, and the memory of a child's 'upturned face.'

One thing more this story brings out —a conviction which establishes for her, once for all, that without the law there is no sin. A new law is born in Gawdine telling him, through the wound he gives to a little child, that he must 'keep the 'ready curses off his lips.' But he could "carry his liquor well," he was still guiltless of offence in that, still waiting

for a new law concerning that. And his judges must wait too.

This is of her abiding sense of movement in every man's life—a movement that gathers as it goes, and in which the man changes, not as a dead thing, a tool, or toy, is changed, but by a free and living creation, in which nothing is made actual and real that does not spring from the creative heart of his own character. You do not make a character as you build a house, laying one stone upon another; nor do you alter it as you might alter a house, pulling out these stones, and putting others in. It grows by inherent power, assimilating, rejecting, amplifying or transmuting, as though that which comes to it were food, which indeed it is—food from heaven or from hell. And every particle of this food that is truly incorporated in the man's life goes to change character through and through, may be trusted

to do it. Therefore, behind laws outworn and habits that should be outgrown, the charity that believes all things and hopes all things discovers the man as he really is, with promise of the man that he will be. Therefore, too, it is a charity that works for men in the light of knowledge of the men, and works wonders—as did Michael Fairless by its means. She says of the thirteenth century bishop about whom she writes a little later, that 'he has known darkness 'and light and the minds of many men; 'most surely, too, he has known that God 'fulfils Himself in strange ways.' We may say the same of her, for she never forgot the 'strange ways' of God with men.

Winter drew towards its end, and she still lived to enjoy once more winter's promise of the spring and the memories alive in her of springs gone by. 'On

'Sunday,' she writes, 'my little tree' [the tree outside her window-panes] 'was limned in white and the sparrows 'were craving shelter at my window 'from the blizzard. Now the mild thin 'air brings a breath of spring in its wake 'and the daffodils in the garden wait 'the kisses of the sun. Hand-in-hand 'with memory I slip away down the 'years, and remember a day when I 'awoke at earliest dawn, for across my 'sleep I had heard the lusty golden-'throated trumpeters heralding the 'spring.'

Verily I believe she had heard those golden-throated trumpeters, for the blood of the plants ran in her veins, as did the blood of beasts and birds, and of all the common life. She was of the community of earth and nothing could ever set her apart. 'The earth called,' she says, 'the fields called, the river 'called—that pied piper to whose

'music a man cannot stop his ears. It 'was with me as with the Canterbury 'pilgrims :—

> '"So priketh hem nature in hir corages;
> 'Than longen folk to gon on pilgrimages."'

In memory she sped on, 'light of heart 'and foot with the new wine of the year,' until she heard 'the voice of the stream,' as with her body's ears, and as with her body's eyes saw spring's pageant; 'green pennons waving, dainty maids 'curtseying, and a host of joyous yellow 'trumpeters proclaiming "Victory" to 'an awakened earth.'

Then—so like her—she notes the solitary flower, one growing apart close to the old tree's side. 'I sat down by 'my lonely little sister, blue sky over-'head, green grass at my feet, decked, 'like the pastures of the Blessèd, in 'glorious sheen; a sea of triumphant 'golden heads tossing blithely back as

'the wind swept down to play with them 'at his pleasure.'

'It was all mine,' she says, from one of her deepest convictions, 'to have and 'to hold without severing a single slender 'stem or harbouring a thought of 'covetousness; mine, as the whole 'earth was mine, to appropriate to my-'self without the burden and bane of 'worldly possession.'

. . . .

'The river of God is full of water. 'The streets of the City are pure gold. 'Verily, here also having nothing we 'possess all things.'

Thus she comes back to her sick-room in the dreadful yet beautiful city of earth, possessing 'all things.'

The gulls from the river sought the open sea; 'the swoop and circle of 'silver wings in the sunlight' was for her to be no more; and with her heart

she followed them ‘ to the free airs of ‘ their inheritance, to the shadow of sun- ‘ swept cliffs and the curling crest of the ‘ wind-beaten waves.’

The little lime-tree before her window spoke to her of the green country—was ‘ gemmed with buds, shy, immature, but ‘ full of promise.’ With the glory of that promise her desire went forth, but upborne by another promise—that of the greater spring for which her spirit waited looked and longed from the valley of the shadow. Of that she writes in the last chapter of this part, as the coming of a new life and a new light.

‘ The dawn breaks, but it does not ‘ surprise us, for we have watched from ‘ the valley and seen the pale twilight. ‘ Through the wondrous Sabbath of ‘ faithful souls, the long day of rosemary ‘ and rue, the light brightens in the ‘ East ; and we pass on towards it with

'quiet feet and opening eyes, bearing 'with us all of the redeemed earth that 'we have made our own, until we are 'fulfilled in the sunrise of the great 'Easter Day, and the peoples come from 'north and south and east and west to 'the City which lieth foursquare—the 'Beatific Vision of God.'

Then her heart sings with one of the old hymns that she delighted in :—

Vere Ierusalem est illa civitas
Cuius pax iugis et summa iucunditas ;
Ubi non prævenit rem desiderium,
Nec desiderio minus est præmium.

Great indeed is the reward that could match with the desire of her soul, with its need and its capacity ; yet having nothing she possessed all things even here, and I do not doubt that she does so still.

III

Spring came, and in May she bade her ast farewell to London. With infinite difficulty, and at the cost of an unforeseen agony of pain, we took her once more into the country, where she could see the white gate again from her garden room, and sometimes, on good days—more rarely than we hoped—be carried out to lie 'on a green carpet, powdered 'yellow and white with the sun's own 'flowers; overhead a great sycamore 'where the bees toil and sing; and sigh-'ing shimmering poplars golden grey 'against the blue.' There, at the White Gate, she wrote the last chapters of 'The Roadmender,' beginning, if I remember well, in June.

'A great joy has come to me'; she says, in the first of those papers, 'one 'of those unexpected gifts which life

'loves to bestow after we have learnt
'to loose our grip of her. I am back in
'my own place very near my road—
'the white gate lies within my distant
'vision; near the lean grey Downs
'which keep watch and ward between
'the country and the sea; very near,
'nay, in the lap of Mother Earth.' . . .
'The day of Persephone has dawned for
'me, and I, set free like Demeter's child,
'gladden my eyes with this foretaste of
'coming radiance, and rest my tired
'sense with the scent and sound of home.
'Away down the meadow I hear the
'early scythe song, and the warm air is
'fragrant with the fallen grass. It has
'its own message for me as I lie here,
'I who have obtained yet one more
'mercy, and the burden of it is life,
'not death.'

Then the roadmender must be himself again and go a-haymaking in another reminiscence, one that tells her a secret

of the 'rain upon the mown grass' and the 'failure' of the fallen swathes. "*My ways are not your ways, saith the Lord.*" 'I remember how I went home 'along the damp sweet-scented lanes 'through the grey mist of the rain, 'thinking of the mown field and Elizabeth 'Banks [a sinner blessed through her 'very sin], and many, many more; and 'that night, when the sky had cleared 'and the nightingale sang, I looked out 'at the moon riding at anchor, a silver 'boat in a still blue sea ablaze with the 'headlights of the stars, and the saying 'of the herdsman of Tekoa came to me— 'as it has come oftentimes since :—

'"Seek Him that maketh the seven 'stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow 'of death into the morning, and maketh 'the day dark with night; that calleth 'for the waters of the sea and poureth 'them out upon the face of earth; the 'Lord is His name."'

She was within a very little of the end, we thought, even then while it was still possible to carry her into the garden and lay her in the shelter of her tree, where, the last time but one that she was out, she wrote the second paper of this part. She thought so herself, as her meditation shews. 'I feel not so 'much desire for the beauty to come,' she says, 'as a great longing to open my 'eyes a little wider during the time which 'remains to me in this beautiful world 'of God's making, where each moment 'tells its own tale of active, progressive 'life in which there is no undoing. 'Nature knows naught of the web of 'Penelope, that acme of anxious pathetic 'waiting, but goes steadily on in ever 'widening circle towards the fulfilment 'of the mystery of God.

'There are, I take it, two master keys 'to the secrets of the universe, viewed '*sub specie æternitatis*, the Incarnation

'of God, and the Personality of Man; 'with these it is true for us as for the 'pantheistic little man of contemptible 'speech, that "all things are ours," 'yea, even unto the third heaven.

'I have lost my voracious appetite 'for books;' she goes on, 'their language 'is less plain than scent and song and 'the wind in the trees; and for me the 'clue to the next world lies in the 'wisdom of earth rather than in the 'learning of men. "*Libera me ab 'fuscina Hophni*," prayed the good 'Bishop, fearful of religious greed. I 'know too much, not too little; it is 'realisation that I lack, wherefore I 'desire these last days to confirm in 'myself the sustaining goodness of God, 'the love which is our continuing city, 'the New Jerusalem whose length, 'breadth, and height are all one.'

The cares of this world, such as they were for her, and the most part of

them were other people's, had slipped away :—'It is a time,' she says, 'of ex-'ceeding peace. There is a place waiting 'for me under the firs in the quiet 'churchyard; thanks to my poverty I 'have no worldly anxieties or personal 'dispositions; and I am rich in friends, 'many of them unknown to me, who 'lavishly supply my needs and make it 'ideal to live on the charity of one's 'fellow-men. I am most gladly in debt 'to all the world: and to Earth, my 'mother'—she writes, as though having suddenly turned her eyes to the loveliness around—'for her great beauty.' Then, with a backward reflexion on the long history of the human spirit in its groping after the divine, she exclaims :—'There is more truth in the believing 'cry, "Come from thy white cliffs, O 'Pan!" than in the religion that 'measures a man's life by the letter of 'the Ten Commandments, and erects

'itself as judge and ruler over him,
'instead of throwing open the gate of
'the garden where God walks with man
'from morning until morning.'

The end of that paper is a breath of her heart's longing for rest:—'As I 'write the sun is setting; in the pale 'radiance of the sky above his glory 'there dawns the evening star; and 'earth, like a tired child, turns her face 'to the bosom of the night.'

Once more she wrote from beneath the tree on one of the last days of June:—'The poplar has lost its metallic shimmer, 'the chestnut its tall white candles; and 'the sound of the wind in the fully-'leaved branches is like the sighing of 'the sea.' Summer was coming to fullness; yet she lingered still. The eyes of her soul sought day by day a land whose boundaries begin where those of this world end:—'Looking across at the

'white gate I wonder concerning the 'quiet pastures and still waters that lie 'beyond, even as Brother Ambrose 'wondered long years ago in the 'monastery by the forest.' She asked for the manuscript of her little book, 'Hilarius,' not thinking that it would ever see light in print; and copied what she had written there of the vision of Brother Ambrose, monk and painter. In 'a still night of many stars' he saw, 'from 'a great and high mountain,' a radiant path in the heavens, and between the stars, as they 'gathered themselves 'together on either side until they stood 'as walls of light,' he beheld 'the Holy 'City with roof and pinnacle aflame, 'and walls aglow with such colours as 'no earthly limner dreams of, and much 'gold;' until to his great grief, 'a little 'grey cloud came out of the north and 'hid the city from his sight.'

The end of that vision is an expression

on her part of the perennial, universal sorrow of the artist of every kind. 'Brother Ambrose fell sick because of 'the exceeding great longing he had to 'limn the Holy City, and was very sad; 'but the Prior bade him thank God, 'and remember the infirmity of the 'flesh, which, like the little grey cloud, 'veiled Jerusalem to his sight.'

Just as she was writing these words the monastery bell of St Hugh rang out, and another, yet harmonious, note sounded in the many-stringed instrument of her soul:—

'They still have time for visions 'behind those guarding walls,' she says, 'but for most of us it is not so. We let 'slip the ideal for what we call the real, 'and the golden dreams vanish while we 'clutch at phantoms: we speed along 'life's pathway, counting to the full the 'sixty minutes of every hour, yet the 'race is not to the swift nor the battle

'to the strong. . . . And yet, looking 'back to the working days, I know how 'much goodness and loving kindness 'there is under the froth and foam. If 'we do not know ourselves we most cer- 'tainly do not know our brethren: that 'revelation awaits us, it may be, first in 'Heaven. To have faith is to create; 'to have hope is to call down blessing, 'to have love is to work miracles.'

Then, back to the mystic's and the artist's wide-eyed longing:—'Above all 'let us see visions, visions of colour and 'light, of green fields and broad rivers, 'of palaces laid with fair colours, and 'gardens where a place is found for 'rosemary and rue.'

The dominant note in Michael Fairless's religion was mystical, as any man may see; and she had the large freedom of judgement, the understanding of and patience with sin, imperfection, failure,

that are given only by the insight of the heart.

It is true, no doubt, that in every religious man an acute realization of one of the three great elements in religion—the mystical, the intellectual, and the institutional—naturally carries with it some degree of subordination of the rest. The mystic is apt to undervalue reflective thought; for his soul opens to him avenues of vision, which are but poorly represented by the attempts of theologians to formulate the poetic utterances of the prophets and the symbolic pictures of saints. He is apt, also, to think too little of the outward sign, however effectual it may be, simply because, in an intimate awareness of his soul, the spiritual grace sweeps it aside. He may forget, in his wordless communion with God, the need there is for utterance—for the language of rite or word or ceremonial gesture—if men of

different intellectual and spiritual ranks or stages in development are to bear each his proper part in a common religious life, and to make clear, even to themselves, the depth and height and breadth of their emptiness without God. Even those among us not justly to be called mystics, in an eminent or distinguishing sense, rarely attain anything near an equal balance between what they apprehend by intellect—by reasoning—and what the institution gives them, as it were, ready made; very many so hold the scales as to let the religion of the heart—of experience of the real, which is all men's mysticism—be outweighed by one or other of those two, perhaps by each. In Michael Fairless heart knowledge and worship, the spirit's admiration and pursuit, ruled all the rest. But from the character of this pursuit and worship in her, from its intensity and inclusiveness, sprang her high ap-

preciation and glad sharing of the rest. The love of the brethren, of all brethren, of all that lives, was as the breath of her own soul's life. She knew, by her hold upon the inner truth for spirit of a material world, the significance for spiritual growth awaiting every man in the least of little things. These material things, small or great, were hers, of her flesh and of her spirit; she could no more give them up, set them aside from her religion, than she could give up God or man. Therefore she sought, as the temple of her worship, a place where there should be room for all; not only for angels and archangels, saints and prophets, but for the sinful and the foolish among men, and for the common things of earth close by and the far-away revealing of the stars. In her Church—by implication at least and promise—all the worlds of life and death, of the spirit and the flesh, should be embraced and

held together. Pan on his white cliffs—'we can never be too Pagan,' she says, 'if we are truly Christian'—the ancient Mysteries, Jewish sacrifice, the ancient world-wide myths—those 'eternal truths 'held fast in the Church's net'—for all these and more there must be hands held out in a temple of the God whose witness was everywhere and in all, whose Spirit fills not only the whole round world but the spaces of the spheres.

By promise and implication, in principle you may say if not in practice, she found what she sought in the English Church; although like the rest of us she had to carry promise forward, by hope and faith, to a fulfilment she could not look for now. But she found sacraments now, bringing to her more than promise. These, in her institutional life, she must have—she for whom all life was sacramental — and especially the

greatest, 'the most social sacrament,' she called it. There in the Church they were for every one of us, as she demanded them; with a meaning plain to be read by men obliged to run; calling aloud upon the ignorant and the blind; showing beacon-lights for those who wandered from the way. There earth and heaven met and the sinner and the saint; there the life of man was taken up into the life and manhood and love of God. The universe was focussed there; and there she worshipped in peace, as one at home.

You see how by disinterestedness she escaped the fate of mystics who lack that sovran antiseptic against self-corruption. You see, too, how it was that she never ceased to value—some might say to over-value — the institutional element in religion. But she was far from thinking that she had discovered, or ever would discover, a Church as it ought to be. She knew too well what

the very promise of catholicity entails of past and present and long-lasting imperfection. She could not help but know and see that an *ecclesia*, a gathering in which all nations and generations should be embraced, and which needed from every man the gifts of the divine spirit that were his, must be marred for want of them. Here was a noble but ill-shapen body composed of ill-shapen members whose number reached back into the dim ages of the life of man, and would stretch into the yet dimmer ages of his life to come—a slowly organizing body, shaping itself and being shapen always anew, suffering, wounded, bearing the marks of scars and of disease that had eaten into its flesh. How could it be anything but as and what it was, even though its Head were the eternal Christ himself, the Humanity of God sharing that scarred and injured flesh? She knew something of what all

this implies of beauty and truth to come slowly, very slowly; she saw something of what sin and folly, ignorance and weakness bring to every work and all the assemblies of mankind. Seeing clearly and confessing that in the greatest religious experiment ever tried upon this earth these things must be reckoned with, must qualify judgement, set a pause upon both complacency and too ready condemnation, she was content, nay happy, to remain where promise opens out an endless way. Can any one of us do more or better?

So much for her attitude towards the institution of the Christian Church. With regard to the intellectual element in religion—especially the schematic and scientific interpretation which we call theology—she was wholly without fear. She had neither leisure nor taste nor scholarship for historical or documentary criticism, but when the results of criti-

cism came her way she was, as always, eager to learn. Serious work of this kind, she was sure, could do the cause of religion nothing but good. Theological interpretation must, of course, emphatically and above all things make sense when face to face with the saints and prophets; an interpretation that did not must go. But it must also make sense in face of better knowledge, whether of history, of science, or of philosophy. Her mind was as hospitable as her heart; and with a delicate and rational discrimination, a power of sifting and rejection, that over and over again served her well in her adventurous career of thought. You wrote in marble, not in sand, when you corrected her mistakes; or rather you wrote as though with some fluent leaven that ran through all the living stuff of her. You found its traces everywhere long after, and learnt to wonder why such vital receptivity was so

rare. She sought truth and ensued it. Moreover, her sense of the height and depth of mystery in man's life and experience precluded for her the easy satisfaction of those superficial dogmatists who 'need no repentance.' 'The 'universe,' she writes, 'is full of miracle 'and mystery: the darkness and 'silence are set for a sign we dare not 'despise.' She was among those for whom that sign is sacramental, conveying that which it declares, bearing with it the ineffable promise embraced for men within the darknesses and silences of God. These, for the mystic, are no barrier, but rather the ocean where his love finds the immense waters of the love of God. 'A sign,' she says, 'that we 'dare not despise'—one that tells us to set our hand before our lips, lest we blaspheme God with our little self-made rules for him. The one rule to which she clung was the rule of Love and Faith

and Hope, the all-sufficing rule of men who feel the stir of the mighty winds of that spirit which blows where it listeth and cannot be stilled.

Summer was going fast when the last scene of her long act of death opened. In the early days of August she grew much worse; after the third she was unable to take any food—only a few drops of water now and then. On the twelfth she told me she must try to keep a promise she had made to Mr Lathbury that she would write something more for him if she could. By this time she was almost blind, and speech was very difficult and painful to her. In spite of this she succeeded in dictating to me, after nine days of starvation and months of wasting, the last chapter of 'The Road-mender.' It was a deed of heroism.

Her mind travelled from the sound of rain after drought, outside her window,

and the roused and eager business of the little birds she loved, back to the panorama of past years. She revived her childhood—'the scent of the first 'cowslip field under the warm side of 'the hedge' where she sang to herself 'for pure joy of their colour and 'fragrance'; bluebells 'like the back-'wash of a southern sea'; Watcombe Down—'a stretch of golden gorse and 'new-turned blood-red field, the green 'of the headland, and beyond, the 'sapphire sea.' Fragrance, music, above all colour—these surged from out her distant memories. And as the roll unfolded and later years revived, it was still the same. Germany, 'the warm-'scented breath of the pines,' 'the tiny 'shifting lamps' of glow-worms 'pale 'yellow, purely white, green as the 'underside of a northern wave,' and in Switzerland a solitary blue gentian—her first—'what need of another, for

'finding one I had gazed into the 'mystery of all.'

Then the past slipped away, giving place to 'the uneventful road' on which she was travelling now. 'Each day 'questions me as it passes; each day 'makes answer for me "not yet."'

'Do I travel alone,' she asks, with a glance at the passage in the Odyssey, 'or am I one of a great company?' The voices of Penelope's suitors send her to the chorus of the voices of earth, the language of worship that 'lies very 'nigh' to man:—'What better note can 'our frail tongues lisp than the voice of 'wind and sea, river and stream, those 'grateful servants giving all and asking 'nothing, the soft whisper of snow and 'rain eager to replenish, or the thunder 'proclaiming a majesty too great for 'utterance? Here, too, stands the 'angel with the censer gathering up the 'fragrance of teeming earth and forest-

'tree, of flower and fruit, and sweetly 'pungent herb distilled by sun and 'rain for joyful use. Here, too, come 'acolytes lighting the dark with tapers— 'sun, moon, and stars—gifts of the Lord 'that His sanctuary may stand ever 'served.'

She comes back to the earth, this child of earth, bearing sheaves of the harvest of heaven. For her there was no gulf set between these two—was not the Incarnation of God one of her 'master-keys'? Heaven and earth were joined in one for her by the life and love that men might share, in which all things are made one. When, at the very last, earth fills her memory and mind with its scent and colours and sound, it is an earth transmuted and transparent. And beyond earth and even heaven is greater marvel still, that which she never forgot—the mystery of the darkness and silence of God, 'the silence greater than

'speech, darkness greater than light.' So, this memory dominating all, she says her last farewell.

We think, or may well think, of Rabindra Nath Tagore :—

'I have got my leave. Bid me fare-
'well, my brothers. I bow to you all
'and take my departure.

'Here I give back the keys of my
'door—and I give up all claims to my
'house. I only ask for last kind words
'from you.

'We were neighbours for long, but I
'received more than I could give. Now
'the day has dawned and the lamp that
'lit my dark corner is out. A summons
'has come and I am ready for my
'journey.'

IV

The after-history of 'The Road-mender' is worthy of note. Messrs Duckworth published it on February

28th, 1902, in the now familiar green covers. Six times in that year it was reprinted; ever since, impression has followed impression until now, when, in the last month of 1912, its thirty-first appears. It had no adventitious aids when it was sent out into the crowded, jostling world of books, where so many good things are lost, crushed by mere numbers. No 'log-rolling,' no powerful trumpeter of its merits, made a way for it. Why, then, did it make one for itself that has widened and gone farther through eleven years, and seems as though it would grow wider and go farther still for many a year to come? Journalists have learnt to call this little book a 'classic'; they use it to condemn or praise a new man's style; it has become for critics a standard in its class. But the more or less professional literary judgement is of small importance and easy to account for. The question that

is of real value for us who read this book, without even the desire, much less the skill, to frame a literary judgement on it, is why it is our own book, why, as I heard the traveller of a great publisher say, 'it is everybody's book.' You may see workmen reading it in omnibuses and trams, hear of queens commanding it, find it ready for you in all the shops for selling books that are new, waste your time if you look for copies in those dusty treasure-houses where they sell them only second-hand. 'Everybody' buys it; nobody throws it away. There is a hard-headed prince of commerce, I am told—there may be many another, for anything I know—who keeps a pile of those little green volumes of mingled poetry and religion, that he may give one to any friend who has unaccountably passed it by. In the States it is served out to millionaires on Japanese vellum or fine hand-made paper, with heaven

knows what outside glory. Certain reviewers, at first—before they had learnt caution or, may be, taken pains—said that 'this kind of thing' had been done before. Many of them have told us that it has been all too abundantly done since. Yet the history of 'The Roadmender' is unique among histories of what people mean by 'this kind of thing.' We have to account for that uncontested fact.

For my part I allow myself to think that the reviewer's diagnosis is wrong. 'The Roadmender' is not that kind of thing; it stands by itself, it is a thing of personal and individual life. That is one reason why it calls forth so living a welcome when we handle it, it seems to *breathe* in our hands. We learn to love it as something that accepts us and responds to us; understands us and finds out our needs in a way of its own.

Here we touch the bottom of the

problem, I believe. Nothing, in fact, is heartily welcomed anywhere unless either a real or an artificial need exists for it and, either openly or secretly, demands it.

I think we may say at once that 'The Roadmender' does not meet artificial needs, such as those created by idleness of body or, especially, of soul, or by the faults and follies of a civilization that has hardly yet begun to grow up. For myself—and I believe I represent a large consensus—I say unhesitatingly that it meets real needs rooted deeply in every one of us, so deeply that very many of us live and die without discovering that they are there. It is addressed, in its profound simplicity, to what is common to man, what is discovered in all men who are truly men, by those who have learnt to read secrets of the heart.

We do not know ourselves; we have

no suspicion, very many of us, that we are not only in need of beauty, let us say, but are craving for it, starved for want of it, going hungry and empty while we try to satisfy ourselves with a thousand worthless mockeries of the real. It is the same with goodness: we are satiated but not satisfied with its substitutes, with imitations and travesties, or rank blasphemies and denials; our appetite is tricked and we are deceived. Even when we have the good will not the bad, goodness, above all holiness(especially the Christian sort), has no charm, we think; it is a mawkish affair, or a fearful and greedy hypocrisy, as Nietzsche tells us. But when we meet it—meet the real thing, noble as well as sweet—then we discover a new region of ourselves and find it empty. We too are able, nay, despite our baser selves, willing and desiring, to worship reality, to follow after goodness, beauty, and

truth—the modes and manners of the almighty Love that searches out our secrets. Yet, until some magic touch releases us from the enchantment of our slavery to lower things and from a far too low esteem of our own spiritual capacity, we do not know it.

So, when the magic touch comes we are a little stirred; weakly perhaps, but yet with true response, we thrill in answer to it. We may go to sleep again, but nothing can ever be as though we had not felt that touch; we may be the worse for it, as they are who shut their eyes to light, or we may be the better through all the lives and worlds to come. 'The Roadmender' has given and will give this touch—rousing the real self of men and women everywhere; or coming to them with the outstretched and friendly hand of one who can speak as like to like and by heart to heart.

This, I think, is why it lives.

THE GATHERING OF BROTHER HILARIUS

'HILARIUS' (as we have always called the book) was written first as a shorter story, a mere sketch, and later filled in and amplified. It was meant to be a parable, a lesson delicately conveyed to a young painter of high artistic promise and sincere religious feeling, but prone to rigid judgements and the use of an inflexible and all too simple moral standard—in fact, Hilarius himself.

So, in her story, Michael Fairless sends this young man—boy indeed he was, even in years—forth from an arranged and sheltered life in the cloister, and from a benumbing established scheme of thought and things, to the rude world, the many-coloured, con-

fused, ever-changing world of men and women and children, of transforming values, of sin that is not sinful and condemnation that does not condemn—a real world where God is and works, joins in the strife of men, treads with them the dust of the highway, is known by them who seek him not, and in fashions very strange to those righteous who need neither repentance nor redeeming love.

Tracts (this tale was avowedly written as a tract) do not always pierce their mark; but the arrow of a tract is not often so sharply pointed or feathered with such grace. I incline to think that this one has found the joints of many a man's armour besides his at which it was aimed.

Assuming, for the moment, the attitude of the critic, I am bound to admit—the writer herself would be the first to admit—that she is an author of one book, as

we say; the book of her life and death, written in a fine disinterestedness and from the fullness and with the candour of her heart. But that is the one book which for any author would either crown his work or cast everything else into the shade. Moreover, this author wrote under disabilities that for most people would have made writing out of any question; and these disabilities chiefly affected work done 'for a purpose'—not welling, as it were, from her creative soul. In a sense, Hilarius is made, not born like the roadmender; and you will think the book skilfully or unskilfully made according to the standard of your taste. But if you choose you may enjoy it well and find in it beautiful things—the singular grace of style its author seemed to possess as a natural gift; her real mind; her vision too; and something of the wit and gaiety in which we who knew her found continual delight, and for

which there was no place when she wrote at the White Gate and from the Valley of the Shadow.

You will find, too, reminders, echoes, of 'The Roadmender.' When she speaks of 'this peace of prayerful 'service, where the clang of the black-'smith's hammer smote the sound of the 'Office bell,' you have the roadmender spirit:—'After all, what do we ask of 'life, here or indeed hereafter, but leave 'to serve, to live, to commune with our 'fellow-men and with ourselves; and 'from the lap of earth to look up into 'the face of God?'

There is the same rejoicing in 'fair 'colours,' in music and the fragrant incense of the earth; the happy knowledge of little children and their transparency to God; the eye that sees the great sacrament of life. And here, as in 'The Roadmender,' the divine sacrament includes, as life includes, our

misshapen world and the sinful men and women in it.

Hilarius is blind; his eyes shall be opened to the meaning of love and of the craving needs of men, his good will roused to new accomplishment, both head and heart stirred to a widening range. "Blind eyes!" are the parting words of the dancer in the forest, who sows in him the seed of promise, yet is 'a sight for gods, but not for monks; 'above all, not for untutored novices' like him:—'"Blind eyes, the very forest 'could teach thee these things an thou 'would'st learn. Farewell, good novice, 'back to thy Saints and thy nursery; 'for me the wide wide world; hunger 'and love—love—love!"'

Hunger and love will tutor Hilarius, tell him secrets of the world, of himself, of those other strange selves, and of God whom he knows too easily under a false name. '"Hast thou ever loved?"'

asks the 'flower incarnate' when he found her dancing in the wind of the woods. Then, answering his shocked surprise:—'"Why, boy, the world is 'full of love, and not all for the Saints 'and the Brethren, and it is good—'good—good! 'Tis the devil and the 'monks who call it evil. Hast thou 'never seen the birds mate in the spring-'time, nor heard the nightingale sing?"'

'"Did'st thou ever hunger, master?"' the dancer's brother asks, rebuked by Hilarius out of the Ten Commandments for stealing 'the Convent's hens.'

Hunger and love in body and soul, coming to man from earth his mother and from the earthly creatures who are all his kin; the nature he shares with them as the ground of his sin and also of his holiness—these Hilarius shall learn. He shall learn that without knowledge and interior acceptance of a law of the spirit there is neither holiness

nor sin. This is to learn of the charity and justice of God; to learn to see that only the writing scored by a man on the roll of his self-created character makes or mars him. Nature waits in every man, from the first fathers of us all to the last of our sons, for the conversion of spirit. It is as the earth, this unconverted nature of ours; it is turned neither one way nor the other, is neither virtuous nor vile, until we make it so. But without the ground of nature there would be no standing for the spirit, no place from which it could either soar or sink. Hilarius must learn of nature and of spirit too. He must learn of the slow learning of the law and of man's slow growth into even a possibility of sin. But above all he must learn of the infinite humility of the love of God as he stoops to find a way into the human heart.

Meanwhile 'he plucked aside his 'skirts and walked in judgement,'

calling, blind-eyed, on the judgement of God to ratify his poor decisions. ' " 'Tis ' an evil, evil world," quoth young ' Hilarius.'

The judgement of God he finds easily enough, as when we are blind we do. ' London, that light-minded city, was a ' heap of graves ' filled by the great reaper of the wrath of God with the plague-smitten corpses of the judged. Wherefore Hilarius, ' having seen much ' evil and the justice of the Almighty,' turns his back on it and will learn to be a great painter, and then return to his monastery in peace. He had watched the falling of a Tower of Siloam that had crushed the evil-doers and confirmed the faith of the righteous. And then the true judgement of God, which is new light in the soul of him who is judged, smote him on the way he had chosen; and he learnt to steal that he might have food for the child of a woman taken in

adultery. ' "See," said the dancer, ' "thou hast learnt to hunger and to ' love." '

Myself, I would have had the story stop there; where, as my memory serves, it stopped in the original version, the painter's tract. But it would never have been published if it had; and that, of course, its author soon discovered. Mr John Murray kindly hastened on the preparation of proofs, and they came just in time for her to read some herself and have others read to her when she could no longer see. The book appeared shortly after her death, some months earlier than 'The Roadmender' in book form. Mr Murray has recently added to his many kindnesses by allowing it to be produced by Messrs Duckworth uniform with the rest of her work. He has also produced it himself in a new and cheaper edition.

THE GREY BRETHREN

For the collection of the stories, poems and sketches published under this title I alone am responsible. There is no need to repeat what I said in the preface about their previous publication in this or that magazine or weekly paper. I had rather, and I think more fitly, discuss some few of them in relation to aspects of the author's character that they point to or reveal.

In ' A Song of Low Degree ' she speaks from the heart of her philosophy, as of her religion :—

> ' Lord, I am small, and yet so great,
> The whole world stands to my estate
> And in Thine Image I create.'

It is the same note that we hear as the roadmender chants the glories of the

daffodil-field, and here too it rouses deeper harmonies.

> 'All, all are mine; and yet so small
> Am I, that lo, I needs must call,
> Great King, upon the Babe in Thee.'
>
> . . . .

'We who are made Kings after His 'likeness,' she wrote in 'The Road-mender,' 'possess all things, not after 'this world's fashion but in proportion 'to our poverty.' Only as we are kings, she saw—masters, not slaves, to the things that we own—do we in fact own, instead of being owned by, either the outer gifts of the world, or the nature and passions in ourselves. So she tells us; and it is the burden of every inclusive mystic's song.

All these mystics are of one family and speak the same language. They are great and small, eloquent or halting in their speech—everywhere they have one mind and one tongue, whether they

stammer, or utter music of the spheres. You may take, for example, one of the very great, Rabindra Nath Tagore; and, turning over the slender volume of his songs, you will find the fulfilment of the voice of the soul of Michael Fairless. Take this, the first in his 'Gitanjali.'

'Thou hast made me endless, such is 'thy pleasure. This frail vessel thou 'emptiest again and again, and fillest 'it ever with fresh life.

'This little flute of a reed thou hast 'carried over hills and dales, and hast 'breathed through it melodies eternally 'new.

'At the immortal touch of thy hands 'my little heart loses its limits in joy 'and gives birth to utterance ineffable.

'Thy infinite gifts come to me only on 'these very small hands of mine. Ages 'pass, and still thou pourest, and still 'there is room to fill.'

Of one family are these, elder and

younger, little or great; of one family and—marvellous to record—of the same family as every one of us. Do we not know it when their word finds its echo in us or an answering thrill, however faint and quickly dying away?

Even when they sing of earth and its joys, we, who ruin those joys at their source and are blind to the real earth, making for it a cloak of thick darkness of our stupidity and sins, find that our blood stirs in answer.

'The same stream of life that runs 'through my veins night and day runs 'through the world and dances in 'rhythmic measures.

'It is the same life that shoots in joy 'through the dust of the earth in number-'less blades of grass and breaks into 'tumultuous waves of leaves and flowers.

'It is the same life that is rocked in 'the ocean-cradle of birth and of death, 'in ebb and in flow.

'I feel my limbs are made glorious by 'the touch of this world of life. And 'my pride is from the life-throb of ages 'dancing in my blood this moment.'

East or West, the voices join in one, and we are able to listen—that is the wonder of us and the ground of our hope.

There are charming pieces in 'The Grey Brethren,' notably 'A German Christmas Eve,' and 'A Christmas Idyll,' with the sermon that is Michael Fairless telling (through the mouth of the Forest Recluse) news of the Kingdom of God and Man. 'My brothers and 'sisters,' she says to us, 'to-night we 'keep the Birth of the Holy Babe, and 'to-night you and I stand at the gate 'of the Kingdom of Heaven, the gate 'which is undone only at the cry of a 'little child. "Except ye be converted 'and become as little children, ye shall 'not enter."

'The Kingdom is a great one, nay, a 'limitless one; and many enter in calling 'it by another name. It includes your 'own hearts and this wonderful forest, 'all the wise and beautiful works that 'men have ever thought of or done, and 'your daily toil; it includes your 'nearest and dearest, the outcast, the 'prisoner, and the stranger; it holds 'your cottage home and the jewelled 'City, the New Jerusalem itself. People 'are apt to think the Kingdom of 'Heaven is like church on Sunday, a 'place to enter once a week in one's best: 'whereas it holds every flower, and has 'room for the ox and the ass, and the 'least of all creatures, as well as for our 'prayer and worship and praise.

'"Except ye become as little children." 'How are we to be born again, simple 'children with wondering eyes?

'We must learn to lie in helpless 'dependence, to open our mouth wide

'that it may be filled, to speak with 'halting tongue the language we think 'we know; we must learn, above all, 'our own ignorance, and keep alight 'and cherish the flame of innocency in 'our hearts.

'It is a tired world, my brethren, and 'we are most of us tired men and women 'who live on it, for we seek ever after 'some new thing. Let us pass out 'through the gate into the Kingdom of 'Heaven and not be tired any more, 'because there we shall find the new 'thing that we seek. Heaven is on 'earth, the Kingdom is here and now; 'the gate stands wide to-night, for it is 'the birthnight of the Eternal Child. 'We are none of us too poor, or stupid, 'or lowly; it was the simple shepherds 'who saw Him first. We are none of us 'too great, or learned, or rich; it was 'the three wise kings who came next 'and offered gifts. We are none of us

'too young; it was little children who 'first laid down their lives for Him; or 'too old, for Simeon saw and recognised 'Him. There is only one thing against 'most of us—we are too proud.

'My brethren, "let us now go even 'unto Bethlehem, and see this thing 'which is come to pass, which the Lord 'hath made known to us."'

Here is the authentic message of the mystic and of religion. It is the proclamation of sovran Love; from which nothing is shut out, by which nothing can ever be forgotten or ignored. 'There 'is only one thing against most of us—'we are too proud.' But for that,—say Michael Fairless and the whole mystical chorus,—but for that, we too should be proclaiming the beauty of the Lord and of his kingdom within us and without.

Of Michael Fairless, as she is in the last of the four stories told to children,

the last thing in the book, I wrote thus in the original preface :—

'Some of the many readers who have 'found her there will understand me 'when I say that the story of her life 'and death, and of her life too (as I 'believe) after death, is written down 'in the little tale of "The Tinkle-'Tinkle," first told to her best beloved 'in the wild garden at Kew, among blue 'hyacinths and shining grasses of the 'spring that spoke to her of Paradise.'

I have told the story of her life and death at greater length now and with comments and comparisons. But I still think that it is all in 'The Tinkle-Tinkle,' and far better told than I can tell it. There will be some who will not agree with me; but they have never known her as I do. They do not see her looking upon herself and every one in the world, and saying, 'I cannot tell you what he 'was like, because no man knows, not

'even the Tinkle-Tinkle himself.' For anyone who had not watched her infinite variety, her swift transitions, her adaptability, the surprises of her, there would be little enough sense in being told that her very self is there when she says :—'Sometimes he lived 'on the ground, sometimes in a tree, 'sometimes in the water, sometimes in 'a cave ; and I can't tell you what he 'lived on, for no man knows, not even 'the Tinkle-Tinkle himself.'

We find her, as well as her interpretation of life, from the beginning of this little tale to the end. And here in this refrain of ignorance, 'no man knows, not 'even the Tinkle-Tinkle himself,' we find an expression of her always reverent agnosticism, the agnosticism of the mystic—of him who sees too deeply to be able to persuade himself that he sees all.

It is she, too, who hears 'a piteous

'weeping' from the least and lowest of the lost creatures of the earth, and would lead each one of them to its own home—'but I cannot tell you how he went, for 'no man knows, not even the Tinkle-'Tinkle.' No man really knows the secret of the irresistible power of love; no man knows, even when it is at work in him and is working by him.

Yet man, as the Tinkle-Tinkle knows, must be ever a seeker; therefore 'it 'was a great grief to the Tinkle-Tinkle 'not to know what he was, or how he 'lived, or where he was going,'—the grief of the metaphysician, with his ever-repeated questions, whence and what? why? whither?—the grief, too, of every honest thinker who does not answer himself with lies. Yet here is the lofty and special privilege of these two, as Michael Fairless was aware; and they must hide both their privilege and their grief:—'It often made him depressed, but he

'always concealed it from the dormice,
'appearing a most cheerful and con-
'tented creature.' This is of the tender-
ness that guards bruised reeds and
the smoking flax. But of the privilege
and indeed of the grief there comes to
the like of Tinkle-Tinkle an opening of
wonders. 'Now it happened on a
'certain evening that the Tinkle-Tinkle
'was travelling over the sea, when
'suddenly in the depths he caught sight
'of a most beautiful creature. It was
'all sorts of colours—white, rosy pink,
'and deep crimson, and pale blue fading
'into white and gold. It had no face
'but a bright light; and it had quantities
'of beautiful iridescent wings, like the
'rainbow; and the most lovely voice
'you ever heard, like the sighing of the
'waves in the hollow of the sea.'

('Thy sunbeam,' says the great Indian poet and seer, 'comes upon this earth 'of mine with arms outstretched, and

'stands at my door the livelong day to 'carry back to thy feet clouds made of 'my tears and sighs and songs.

'With fond delight thou wrappest 'about thy starry breast that mantle of 'misty cloud, turning it into numberless 'shapes and folds and colouring it with 'hues everchanging.

'It is so light and so fleeting, tender 'and tearful and dark, that is why thou 'lovest it, O thou spotless and serene. 'And that is why it may cover thy 'awful white light with its pathetic 'shadows.')

'And the beautiful Creature cried out 'to him, and its voice made Tinkle-'Tinkle remember a dream he had once 'had of sunshine, and forest trees, and 'the song of birds; and the Creature 'said, "Ah, Tinkle-Tinkle! you are 'lonely and perplexed and sad, and you 'do not know whence you came nor

'why you are here; but the dormice 'know and the green bird knows, and 'I know, and we are glad for your 'being. Go on, Tinkle-Tinkle, and do 'not sorrow, for some day you shall 'come back to me, and I will wrap 'you in my wings and take you 'where you belong, and then you will 'understand."'

Love knows and love shall reveal, and the beginning of the tale of love makes its hearer 'glad with a strange new gladness'; so that when he returns to 'his cave' he is 'not alone, for the spirit of hope' goes with him.

Not only the metaphysician hidden in other men as in Michael Fairless speaks in this child's tale, but the artist too. 'The Tinkle-Tinkle had one gift—he 'could sing—how, no man knew, not 'even the Tinkle-Tinkle himself; and 'this is how he discovered his gift.

'One day in a secluded spot in the 'forest he found a dying stag, and the 'Tinkle-Tinkle was moved with great 'compassion and yet could do nothing.

'The great stag's head drooped lower 'and lower till even the sun melted in a 'mist of pity, and the trees sighed, and 'the breezes hushed their voices. Then 'suddenly the Tinkle-Tinkle crept close 'and began to sing, why or how he knew 'not. As he sang, the birds and the 'stream were silenced and the breezes 'ceased, and the great stag's breathing 'grew less and less laboured, and his 'eyes brightened, and presently he rose 'slowly to his fect and paced away to 'join the rest of the herd, and the 'Tinkle-Tinkle went with him.

'When the stag's companions heard 'the story, they wept for all that had 'befallen their leader, but rejoiced also 'and blessed the Tinkle-Tinkle; and he 'sang once more for them, and the star-

'spirits leaned out of their bright little 'windows to listen, and the night was 'glad.'

A dumb poet, a frustrate artist, the singer of this child's song was when she sang it. She could not know that her swan-song would travel through all the world of her own people and bring her blessing; but she knew the artist's longing and had felt, too, not a little of the strength of the power of beauty in his hands.

The end of the story comes as the Tinkle-Tinkle began 'to feel very old 'and worn and weary,' and the spirit of hope, that went back with him to the world's cave when he had seen in a vision the light of its day, stirred within his heart. 'Then he remembered 'the promise of the beautiful Creature, 'and went slowly over the sea hoping 'the time had come for it to be fulfilled,

'and it had. The beautiful Creature 'stretched out its lovely rose and purple 'wings and wrapped the Tinkle-Tinkle 'in their warm soft greatness, and bore 'him down and down through the depths 'till they came to the Great Gate. At 'the beautiful Creature's voice it swung 'slowly back, and they passed down the 'Blue Pathway, which is all ice, cut and 'carved into lovely pinnacles and spires, 'very blue with the blue of the summer 'sky and the southern seas. The Tinkle-'Tinkle could just see it from between 'the beautiful Creature's wings, stretch-'ing away in the blue distance, and at 'the end one star.

'Presently—and though the time had 'been one thousand years it had not 'seemed long to the Tinkle-Tinkle— 'they came out into a beautiful place 'that was nothing but light, and the 'beautiful Creature set the Tinkle-Tinkle 'down. He looked around him and saw

'many other Tinkle-Tinkles, and he
'knew them for what they were and
'loved their beauty; and the Creature
'gently swept one of its purple pinions
'across him, and the Tinkle-Tinkle took
'form. He had many, many little soft,
'strong hands and many little white
'feet, and long sweeping wings and a
'face which shone with something of
'the light of the beautiful Creature; and
'the Tinkle-Tinkle saw and understood
'and sang for joy.'

Vere Ierusalem est illa civitas
Cuius pax iugis et summa iucunditas;
Ubi non prævenit rem desiderium,
Nec desiderio minus est præmium.

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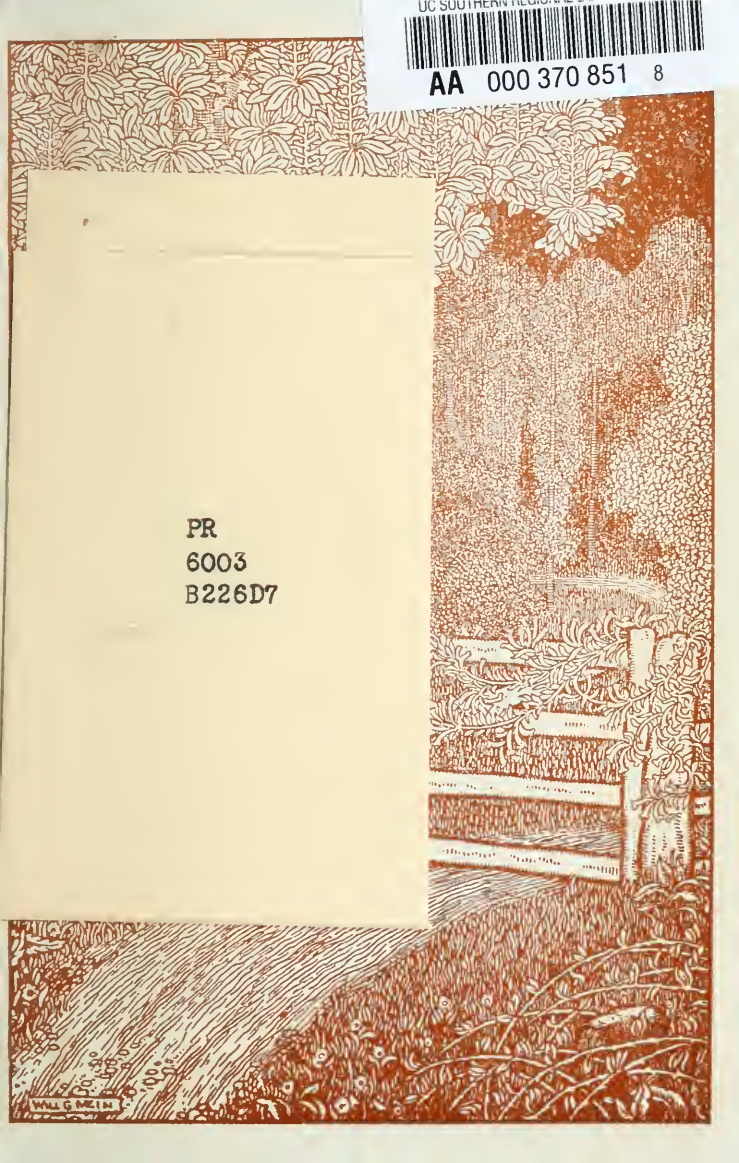

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